

INFORMATION ITEM

Approach and Timeline for Delta Plan Ecosystem Amendment

Summary: Staff will discuss the approach and timeline for an amendment to Chapter 4 of the Delta Plan, *Protect, Restore, and Enhance the Delta Ecosystem* (Ecosystem Amendment). This presentation will primarily focus on the proposed process, including communications and outreach strategy, timeline, and an overview of the anticipated scope of the amendment. Staff will also discuss how this schedule integrates with current Delta Plan amendments and other related activities.

Background

In 2013, when the Council approved the Delta Plan, it adopted policies and recommendations in Chapter 4 directing agencies to restore aquatic habitat and improve water quality while respecting local land uses and expanding opportunities for nature-based recreation and tourism. At the time, State and federal agencies, and stakeholders, were exploring a comprehensive approach to habitat restoration through the Bay Delta Conservation Plan (BDCP). The 2013 Delta Plan intended that many of the conservation measures planned in the BDCP would contribute to the success of ecosystem restoration, “Success of ecosystem restoration depends on considering and addressing all stressor categories as well as completing and implementing the BDCP” (Delta Plan, p. 148).

Since 2013, there have been significant milestones reached and lessons learned in planning, restoration, and monitoring which provide further insights into the opportunities and challenges for ecosystem restoration in the Delta. For example, major statewide initiatives, such as the California Water Action Plan (2014) and the Proposition 1 Water Bond (2014) have provided focus and increased funding available for restoration in the Delta.

In April 2015, the Governor Brown announced new plans to accelerate Delta habitat restoration and proceed with water infrastructure improvements through two independent projects: California EcoRestore and California WaterFix¹. The Delta Plan had included a deadline of January 1, 2016 by which BDCP needed to be complete in order to be incorporated into the Delta Plan, which was not met.

At the September 2016 Council meeting, staff presented an informational item, “Laying a Foundation for a Proposed Ecosystem Amendment.” During this presentation, representatives from the San Francisco Estuary Institute presented *A Delta Renewed: A guide to Science-based Ecological Restoration in the Delta* and

¹ <https://www.gov.ca.gov/news.php?id=18940>

the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) presented the *Delta Conservation Framework* (Framework). DFW staff returned this past August to provide an update on the Framework, which is currently out for public review and is expected to be finalized by the end of 2017. The Council has also recently released several publications, the *State of Bay Delta Science* (2016), *EcoRestore Adaptive Management Program White Paper* (2017), and the [Science Action Agenda](#) (SAA) which further define the science support needed. These reports are anticipated to inform amendments to Chapter 4.

Approach and Scope of the Ecosystem Amendment

Through a public process beginning now and lasting through 2018, the Council will work with partner agencies, stakeholders, and the public to build upon, further refine, and amend Chapter 4 of the Delta Plan. Currently, the Delta Plan, and specifically Chapter 4, includes regulations covering flow, introduction of nonnative invasive species, and criteria for priority restoration sites.

Staff intends that this amendment will consider the past and future effects of climate change and sea level rise, incorporate lessons learned about adaptive management of the Delta ecosystem, identify best practices, address needed institutional changes to improve implementation of restoration actions, and be informed by the best available interdisciplinary science. Through this amendment, the Council will review and update, as appropriate, the proposed actions, policies, recommendations, and performance measures in Chapter 4.

Outreach

Staff has committed to an inclusive, multi-party approach to develop a draft amendment. Since mid-September, the Council's Chair and Vice Chair and staff have held a series of listening sessions with stakeholders. Over the coming months, staff will continue to engage in outreach to other State, federal, and local agencies, Delta residents, stakeholders, and the public; hold public meetings; and work with Delta Plan Interagency Implementation Committee members to solicit input and feedback at the meeting on Nov. 13, 2017. A fact sheet describing this Amendment has been developed and is included as Attachment 1.

Staff anticipates that California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) compliance will be achieved through the development of a Programmatic Environmental Impact Report. Per CEQA guidelines, a Scoping meeting will be held to receive public input on the proposed project.

Timeline for Proposed Amendment

Staff has prioritized the Ecosystem Amendment and have committed to its completion by the end of 2018. Highlights and milestones are presented below:

- October 2017 - March 2018: Staff prepares draft Ecosystem Amendment, including refined performance measures and review of policies and

recommendations.

- January 2018: Staff provides informational briefing at Council meeting, including presentation of draft performance measures.
- Winter - Spring 2018: Council reviews and provides input on proposed policies and recommendations.
- Spring 2018: Staff files Notice of Preparation to initiate CEQA and holds scoping meeting.
- Spring 2018: Council approves Draft Ecosystem Amendment as the proposed project description, in order to begin CEQA review.
- Summer 2018: Draft CEQA document released for public review.
- December 2018: Staff recommends Council certification of CEQA document and approval of Ecosystem Amendment.

Fiscal Information

Not applicable.

List of Attachments

Attachment 1: Ecosystem Amendment Fact Sheet

Contact

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